I Want Him
Back...

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I Want Him Back...

By RainyDayGirl

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Chapter 1

I Want Him Back... [Sequel to I love him, I love him not...]

Okay, just a reminder guys, this is a sequel. So, if you want it to make sense, read 'I love him, I love him not...' first! Thanks x And sorry the first one's so short. You can call it a prologue if you want. Thanks again x

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veins like it was trying to escape. And then something happened. It was like the ground shifted beneath her and suddenly she was nowhere. It was like she was floating and trying to run all at once.

But her legs grew leaden, almost like she was turning to stone. Her eyes were wide and fearful, flickering one way and then the next. She couldn't escape and she couldn't scream. And suddenly Keith was there, watching her sadly. His eyes weren't the right colour though. His were...his eyes...

Terror erupted in Belinda's head, the panic consuming her completely. What colour were they?! Why couldn't she remember?! His eyes, his beautiful eyes, she couldn't forget them, could she? But no matter how much she concentrated on them, they wouldn't come to her. But she knew - she knew, - they were wrong, the wrong colour, the wrong depth...

But now he was reaching for her, his touch making her skin crawl. And then he was dragging her backwards, into the bright light, his grip inhuman now. She was screaming and screaming but he wouldn't let her go. His - it's - lips touched her cheek

and she felt how dry they were, felt how...dead...they were. And she started screaming all over again.

Chapter 2

I Want Him Back... - Part 2

"Belinda, wake up. Wake UP!"

Catching her breath, Belinda bolted upright in bed, sweating and crying. She couldn't breathe properly, her head pounding, the memory of her dream still vivid. The sobs were wracking her body and she tried to escape the terror and hate. Because she hated herself right then, hated that she was here, in Keith's house without him. But there was nowhere else for her anymore, not since she'd come home to find her mum passed out on the bathroom floor.

It had been one thing after another once Keith had disappeared and she was still trying to find her feet.

Keith's mother, Gina as she insisted Belinda call her, had been supportive and helpful. She hadn't once blamed Belinda for the loss of her son and she even went out of her way to make Belinda comfortable. And his little sister, Maggie, was always playing games and joking with her.

And it was Maggie who was holding her now as the sobs wouldn't leave. It was Maggie who hushed her, begged her not to cry as she remembered Keith. It took a while but slowly the tears subsided and Belinda could look at Maggie without crying. She looked into the beautiful brown eyes and felt the panic resurfacing. She knew her eyes were wide, untold fear trying to break free.

"Maggie, oh god." She could feel sobs breaking her speech, but she couldn't cry any more. The tears were running dry, leaving her feeling hollow and broken. "Maggie, I know this sounds stupid but do you have a picture of Keith? I mean, that I could see? I mean, I understand if you don't but-"

"Whoa, whoa, slow down Bel," Maggie whispered. "Of course I have pictures! It'd be insane not to! But...it

might take a little while to find one. He didn't...doesn't...like having his photo taken."

"I know this is weird but...do you have any where you can see his eyes?" Belinda asked, her teeth worrying her bottom lip again. She knew she sounded stupid but she couldn't think enough past the panic to care. "I really, really need to see his eyes again. I just...can't picture them. And I'm really scared that I-I'm forgetting him! Please!"

Maggie looked awkward for a moment before pottering out of the room. She could see the desperation in Belinda's eyes. She could see the way they were losing their will, their spark with every day. Maggie may only be eight but she knew there were some things that left irreparable scars. And Belinda was losing everything, all at once, all without anything back. And then there was that Emma girl...

Maggie's eyes hardened when she thought of Emma. The girl had been around, looking for Keith once. Maggie had taken an instant dislike to her, the way she behaved. And then, when Emma had seen Belinda, her whole attitude - coldly polite at the best -

had become taunting, causing misery to Belinda in so many different ways. Even then it had taken Maggie forever to get Emma out of the house. Belinda hadn't been the same after though.

It was then that the nightmare's started. Every night, Belinda would wake screaming and sobbing from the guilt and anguish. Maggie felt helpless, unable to do anything to get rid of them, unable to reach Belinda through the fog of misery. And what could she do anyway? An eight-year-old was hardly the most comforting of people when who you wanted was a big strong capable boy, someone who had swept you off of your feet, Maggie thought to herself glumly.

Belinda was still looking glazed when Maggie returned, although to her credit, she did try to act perkier. And she was obviously trying not to worry Maggie too much, trying not to let her see how much pain she was really feeling. Maggie shuddered involuntarily at the thought and was glad of the photograph that currently held all of Belinda's attention. She hated to think of how much of a burden it must be to protect such a small girl from

the truth. She prayed she would never have to suffer the way Belinda was, however mean it was to think it.

{I know it's not a fabulous chapter but I'm really having trouble at the minute. Please be patient with me =]}

{Extra Note!: Begging with the prettiest pleases, could people start commenting and other shizz? I would really like to know what you think of my story. Thanking youuuu!}

Chapter 3

I Want Him Back... - Part 3

Belinda woke the next day feeling a little better than she normally did. After last night's fiasco, Maggie had insisted that she keep the photograph to keep the fears at bay. She obviously knew it was a struggle for Belinda to wake up in the morning, despite the effort Belinda put in to hide it. I must scare the hell out of her sometimes, she thought absent-mindedly. And, even though it was a difficult task, Maggie was helping. She wanted to make up for the fact Maggie didn't have an older brother and it was all her fault.

Standing in the shower, Belinda let the dream from last night rush back over her. She was getting better at just letting it run over her, not screaming out. She

felt like the dreams were important, like they meant something. Sometimes, she even thought she was supposed to be somewhere else. She just wished she could pick up on what was important in the dreams. Instead, it was like she was trying to catch water with open hands. Remnants caught hold and clung for moments but soon fell or dried up.

Once she was dressed, she was out of the door. She couldn't bear to hang around for too long, didn't like to face a Maggie who hadn't gotten enough sleep...again...because of her. Maybe she should go home, let Maggie sleep without hearing her terrified screams. Visit after school maybe and then she'd at least be able to keep the house tidy. Then there was that part-time job she was constantly promising herself she was going to find...

No. She wouldn't allow herself to become even more pessimistic. She was getting better at this, she decided. Waking up, going to school...just living, she supposed. Even now, looking at Emma she didn't feel the insane urge to burst into tears any more. And hardly anyone was picking on her now, after what

happened to her mum. She even thought people were going out of there way to make sure she was okay! Nobody close to Emma, obviously, but that didn't matter.

"Belinda, how're you doing?" Emma said, her sickly sweet voice almost making Belinda cringe away. She only barely managed not to and that might have been because a wall was supporting her. She turned around and aimed a smile at Emma. At least, she hoped it was a smile.

"I'm okay Emma, what's up?"

That shut Emma up. Obviously, Emma had been hoping for Belinda to get scared, ask Emma to leave her alone, possibly even beg. Emma couldn't have been accustomed to a Belinda who didn't give way all the time, didn't shy away from popular people. Belinda was finally everything she had wanted to be - and she was miserable.

"Look Emma, what do you want? You came over here, I assume you want something even if it's stupid. And if you don't want anything," she added dangerously, "I wouldn't suggest coming over here

again. I may not be your worst enemy but I'm sure you don't want your friends to think I'm a friend."

"You bitch," Emma hissed vehemently. "How dare you talk to me like that? You do it again and you'd better watch your step, 'cause I'll make sure you get yours. Don't you ever think for a second you're better than me. Got it? Because I'm not saying this again, freak."

Watching Emma sashay off, Belinda couldn't bring herself to feel any fear. Not even fake fear to make Emma leave her alone. She just wasn't made for that anymore, not since Keith had brought her out into the light all her own. And she refused to feel like a little girl trapped in Emma's world any longer. If Emma wanted a war, she would damn well get one. And this time, it wouldn't be one-sided.

Chapter 4

I Want Him Back... - Part 4

[Ack, I know it's taken FOREVER to upload. I'm sorry, really. The writer's block got worse, I honestly wish it hadn't. Enough of my moping anywho! Hope you like it! Comment or vote or SOMETHING or I'm going to start thinking I should be reading instead of writing ^_^ Thanks for reading so far and for the comments people HAVE put!]

"Hey, Belinda!"

Turning at her name was becoming automatic. Damn. If it became an automatic response she'd be turning when people were insulting her and she wouldn't be able to stop it getting to her. But it wasn't

Emma or one of her cronies running to catch up with her this time. He did look familiar though, his red hair instantly recognisable. But what was his name, she thought, frustrated.

"How are you holding up, Bel?" the boy said, grey eyes grabbing her attention. "I heard you were staying at Keith's house. Is everything okay at yours?"

"Oh, hang on, you're...Keith's friend...Jake, right?"

"Jack," he said, grinning as he offered his hand. "I didn't know you knew Keith that well though. I mean, how come you're staying there?"

"It's not like I know them that well," Belinda started before she spotted Emma standing not-too-far away. Her eyes narrowed and she turned back to Jack with unusual anger. "It's just that they took me in because my mum collapsed. I'm planning on leaving soon though, just because it's a little awkward. So don't worry about it."

"Wait, what?" Jack looked genuinely confused, his eyebrows knitting together. "Look, I'm not trying to say you shouldn't be there. In fact, seeing as

Keith's...gone AWOL, I think it's great that somebody's taking care of his little sister. I mean, she's only eight. Anyway, I'm sorry your mum isn't feeling great."

"Oh, it's not too bad..." Belinda lied, not wanting him to know just how much she needed someone to talk to. Nobody had bothered talking to her since the two boys had disappeared, isolating her from the rest of her classmates. "I mean, she's...sorry, I can't really talk about it," she mumbled.

"Hey, don't sweat it. Listen, I noticed you sit alone at lunch and...do you think I could come sit with you? I mean," he continued hastily, "I would just come sit but you've had so much bad luck, I thought I'd ask first."

"S-sure. Um, sorry for snapping at you. But I...anyway, I guess I'll see you at lunch."

Once Jack was gone, Belinda began worrying. She couldn't help it, her paranoia of anyone in the popular crowd taking her head by storm. Even though it was Jack, one of the nicest guys in their group, she couldn't help but think there was something wrong with this. Maybe she should stop

being so cynical, stop suspecting people of everything...but it was all that kept her sane. God, I wish this hadn't happened, she thought to herself for maybe the hundredth time. Maybe if I had just ignored Andrew...maybe if I had just trusted Keith...maybe...maybe...maybe.

Abruptly Belinda's thoughts were cut off, leaving her momentarily lost. And then the other part of her - the confident part, the steady, unwavering and strong part of her - took over. There was no point in maybes. She was wallowing in self pity and she had the choice to mope around or try and fix it. And she had been wavering between the two options, sometimes the self pity so overwhelming that she couldn't concentrate on helping.

Smiling grimly to herself she walked to maths, head held high. She didn't even falter as she usually did at the daunting sight of two empty seats that had been full only a month ago. She refused to meet anyone's eyes, keeping a cool distance from everyone and everything. Even when she knew everybody was staring at her, she couldn't bring herself down. She

wouldn't be weak, she wouldn't be timid and she refused to be intimidated. Even by the teacher, who looked at her with a mix of disapproval and pity.

It wasn't as though she had ever had a wonderful life. But the changes in her life just now were things that she couldn't change so everyone was feeling at least a little sorry for her. However many rumours were spreading, however much Emma tried to twist it, Belinda was currently on the untouchable list. And that would give her enough strength to get through this. It might even give her the strength to change the rest of her life.

Finishing lessons for lunch, Belinda scarcely remembered the promise of company at lunch. So she was surprised to see somebody sitting at her table, albeit briefly. Getting past the shock, she sat rigidly with Jack, her smile feeling forced even to her. He returned the plastic smile with a grin so genuine that she couldn't help but relax. It was like sitting with Keith all over again, the security making her feel better instantly.

"So," she began, her eyes less remote than they had been in quite some time. "I can't believe you actually came to sit with me. Why are you?"

"I dunno," Jack said, obviously not put off by her directness. "I remember Keith used to watch you sometimes, so I figure...well, he wa- is, he is my best mate, so I figure I'll watch out for you when he can't."

"He used to watch me?" Belinda asked, curiosity burning. She'd known that he would look at her sometimes but she hadn't known anyone else could have noticed. "Since when?"

"Hm, it's not been too long. It's a pretty recent thing actually, maybe since just after that guy came here. I sort of wanted to know what was going on but he never brought it up."

Jack shrugged before starting in on his lunch. Belinda looked back down again, disappointment making her own lunch seem flavourless. She had known Keith would have had no reason to watch her until she needed saving but she had hoped...it was stupid of her. But she couldn't help it and now she was getting depressed again. It would be so much easier, just to

be around him again, to have that absolute security. Jack could mimic the feeling of ease but she was scared it would break if she leaned on it too much and then it would just-

"So were you serious earlier?" Jack interrupted her train of thoughts, jerking her back into the canteen. "About leaving Keith's place, I mean. Because that wasn't what I was getting at, really. I know his mum must like you quite a bit to let you live in her house, even if she was just taking pity on you."

"I...it's complicated," Belinda said, frowning slightly. She hadn't thought about why Gina was so nice to her. She had always assumed it was something to do with Andrew, making the leap that if Keith knew Andrew was a genie, the rest of his family was in on the secret. She'd never taken the time to ask...pulling herself out of her head, she focused on Jack again. "I mean, I was getting to know Keith just before he disappeared and I didn't really have any other friends or family who could take me in."

"Man, that must've sucked some," Jack said sympathetically. "Still, at least somebody did take you

in. What do you think of Maggie? She's one smart kid, isn't she?"

"Er, yeah, she's pretty cool." Belinda was having difficulty with the rapid topic change. "She seems pretty...advanced for someone her age. I mean, I'm pretty sure I was clueless when I was eight but she just takes everything in. Kind of like a sponge."

And Jack was just...there, the whole time changing topics as quickly as it seemed possible. He let Belinda talk and then he filled any blanks, making Belinda feel more comfortable with every minute. She hadn't felt so at ease in months, even since before meeting Andrew and getting to know Keith. Thinking back, she had to admit she hadn't felt so relaxed since before her dad had left. Always there was some tension in her, coiling her like a spring.

"So I reckon," Jack said, looking at his watch, "that I am long overdue a visit to Gina's house. Do you mind if I come back with you today? I haven't visited in nearly a month because..."

Belinda nodded, dazed. She knew what he was getting at but she wasn't sure it was her place to say

whether he could come or not. She didn't want Geri to start regretting having her in the house, not if she could help it. And then there was the fact that she really wasn't sure if she was staying for much longer...

Jack seemed to understand her dilemma. He said, "Hey, listen it's okay. She won't mind me coming over, honest. Her house is like a second home to me, always has been. So shall I meet you by the bike racks?"

Arranging it made it seem more ethereal, like it wasn't really happening. Jack was...different from anyone she knew. It had felt right with him, talking to him and letting her feelings show a little. But now that lunch was over, she had assumed the spell would disappear and he would return to his popular world. Instead, he was planning on going back to Keith's house with her, like it was natural.

Waving to Jack, she felt a warm glow fill her, lighting her from top to toe. And she went to her lessons smiling, willing the day to be over.

Chapter 5

I Want Him Back... - Part 5

[Yayness for people! I'm feeling kind of ill so typing is about all I can really do ^_^ so my followers may be privileged with yet MORE story! lolness, I am joking but thanks to all those who still read it anyway! Keep the feedback coming, good and bad, 'kay? Much appreciation to NougamiNeuro11, who should put their next part up ASAP. There's a bit in here, just for them, they'll know when they see it. ^_^ thanks again!]

Belinda could feel her nerves mounting as she watched people pour past her. Was he going to turn up? Was Emma going to appear in about an hour and tell her it was all a joke? Would she ever stop

assuming Emma was behind everything? Oh God, she thought. I'm turning into one of those paranoid people that nobody likes. I'm going to end up like that lady at the end of my street, with sixty-two cats who wants to seem hip. Oh dear God don't let me end up like her.

"Hey Bel, sorry that took me so long," Jack called to her through the crowd. She let out the breath she was apparently holding in a noisy 'whoosh' of air. Again, she felt at ease around him, a pressure releasing somewhere inside her. She smiled at him before eyeing the bicycle he was pushing warily.

"Uh, and how am I meant to keep up with that?" Belinda asked sceptically. Jack laughed at the distaste in her voice.

"I wouldn't expect you to run after it."

"Oh, so you'll be getting there first?" Belinda snorted, rolling her eyes. "Look, Gina and Maggie aren't going to be home for a while so you couldn't get in anyway. So why don't you-"

"I meant you could ride on the back Bel," Jack said, indicating the extra footholds [WN, I don't actually know what they are but I have seen them before!] before shifting forwards to give her space. "Come on, it's easier than us both walking."

"But- I mean- I-" Belinda stuttered before finally getting her mouth around what she wanted to say. "I'll be too heavy for it. Seriously, you should just come over in maybe an hour." Then someone else will be home, she wanted to say. Then you won't get bored and regret coming altogether.

"Oh, come on," Jack scoffed, one of his eyebrows quirked. It was amazing how at ease he seemed to be around her already, giving Belinda that security blanket feeling. "Tiny little thing like you? Bet you weigh nothing compared to my little brother."

Belinda clambered onto the back, embarrassed and slightly uncomfortable. Even slightly afraid. She had never ridden on the back of someone else's bicycle, always thinking she would fall off. That fear renewed itself as she felt the wheel at her feet turning but it soon vanished when Jack didn't even waver as he

pushed off. His shoulders felt wonderfully solid under her fingers, making her whole fear seem irrational.

When they got to the house, Jack wasn't even out of breath. Belinda looked at him, astonishment at this 'miraculous' feat evident on her features. Jack caught one look at her face before chuckling to himself and indicating the front door. Belinda felt immediately embarrassed again, rushing to the door only to trip into a bush.

Jack went from chuckling to roaring so much that he couldn't actually help her out of it before she got herself out. She glared at him - although it was difficult. She knew if he had tripped she would be doing the same thing. She was just relieved that it was the friendly kind of laughter you get from someone who couldn't help it, instead of the unkind laughter she was accustomed to receiving.

"Hello?" Belinda called out automatically, even though she knew nobody could possibly be there yet. It made her feel better to fill the silence.

"So what time does everyone get back?" Jack asked, totally at ease, even though it was just Belinda and him. "I mean, I know you're here but, no offence, you don't exactly seem at ease."

Belinda's face instantly coloured. How had he known? She hadn't said anything wrong, hadn't done anything more stupid than fall in a bush...had she? Oh God, she thought abstractly. He must think I'm some kind of idiot. Even now she couldn't summon words in her defence. And then her mind went utterly blank again. Really, why was she so worried? He was just pointing out something and that was nothing to get worked up about.

As she was calming down the door behind them opened again. In came Maggie, bouncing on the balls of her feet and grinning madly. Belinda had never been so happy to see the little round face with those warm brown eyes. Brown eyes that were currently shining whilst looking at Jack, who seemed every bit as pleased to see Maggie. How...oh, of course, Belinda thought instantly. Jack had even talked about her earlier, asking her for her opinion.

"Hey Mags, how're you holding up?" Jack asked, bending down to Maggie's height. "Not still causing trouble are you?"

"Nope," Maggie giggled, popping the 'p'. "I've been a good girl. Ask Belinda, right?"

Belinda just smiled at the obvious companionship between the two. Jack just seemed to have a way with her. Belinda hadn't seen her smile like that before. And the guilt that came crashing on her then wrenched the smile from her face and brought the sting of tears to her eyes. She turned quickly to keep Maggie or Jack from noticing and bustled into the kitchen.

"What do you want to drink Maggie?" Belinda called, her voice steady. She was pleased and that brought her further from her dark corner. "And would you like anything Jack?"

"Nothing for me Bel," came Jack's reply, moments before Maggie called, "apple juice!"

It took another half hour for Belinda to calm down - and that was because Gina came home. She wasn't

sure what was making her uncomfortable anymore, not since Maggie went to do homework. It wasn't the same as hanging out with Keith had been but it wasn't completely different. She was still trying to see what was and wasn't different when he said he had to leave before his mum got worried.

Belinda kept her face from falling even though she did want him to stay. She just felt so...at ease around him, something she had rarely felt since she'd met Andrew. Even with Keith it had been a keyed up kind of peace, charged with all the emotions of...wanting him, needing him. With Jack it was a sleepy peace that would bring grateful tears to her eyes had she not been so content.

But she smiled as she waved him goodbye, enjoying his promise that he would see her tomorrow. She had never had that gentle reminder, not from Andrew, Keith or even Jess. It was like he was chiding her for thinking he might disappear, as though he understood where her reluctance at sharing came from. And, even with such knowledge, he didn't seem

to be abandoning her, didn't appear to want to sever the bond of friendship just yet.

"He's good for you, you know," Maggie said knowingly when Belinda finally came in. Belinda looked up startled before Maggie continued. "I mean, you've been smiling. Really smiling, as opposed to smiling because you have to. It's good for you."

"Oh Maggie," Belinda said, tears rushing again. She hadn't had the girl fooled at all. She had thought she was so clever, hiding her grief and pain, give or take a few nightmares. But all this time, Maggie had watched and worried after her, had attempted to find some solution that could save her from herself. "Oh Maggie, I'm so sorry. I...I never wanted you to..."

"It's okay, Belinda," Maggie said blithely. "I knew you didn't want me to know, so I...well, I tried not to let you know I did," she said, giggling slightly. "I guess I'm better at this than you."

Half-giggling, half-sobbing, Belinda gripped Maggie in a tight hug. She knew, then and there, what it was like to have a little sister for your best friend. And she loved it.

Chapter 6

I Want Him Back... - Part 6

That night was the first time in a month that nightmares hadn't corrupted her sleep. It was an odd feeling, waking to the sound of an alarm instead of to the sound of her own screaming. She let the feeling fill her from head to toe with satisfaction before rolling out of bed. Her bedside clock read 6:30. It was such an ordinary time and it made such a difference. She felt refreshed and well-rested for a change, which gave her an extra boost of confidence. Today, at least, she would do something useful.

Tiptoeing into the kitchen, she looked into the fridge. There was hardly anything and she found herself wondering when the last time she'd eaten breakfast

was. It had definitely been a while...no, she couldn't even remember what it was she used to eat. It was a hopeless exercise but the lack of such a normal knowledge left Belinda frustrated. Surely, she thought, I have not been so stupid as to...but she had. She was always forgetting breakfast in her rush in the mornings. All of this because of a nightmare...

No matter now, she needed to get back to sorting her breakfast today. Hmm...maybe she should have...some toast? Yes, toast was a safe option, she decided, sticking bread into the toaster. Now, what to have on it...

It took her until her toast popped out of the toaster to decide what to have on it but then she was happy to crunch away on it happily. And then, realising how hungry she was, she grabbed an apple before making her way up to the shower-room again, wanting to wash away...she halted. Normally, she wanted to wash away the sweat and tears that came with her dream but today...well, she was still going to shower. She may be a freak but she wasn't an unhygienic freak.

She was finished with her shower before Maggie was out of bed but ran into Gina in the hall. Gina looked surprised to see her awake and Belinda didn't remember until she was safely in her room that Gina wasn't aware that her nightmares were all that frequent. Maggie must have kept true to her word that first night, not letting on how bad they really were...she would have to find some way to repay them both: Maggie for being so reliable and Gina for giving her a home.

Soon, she went to make sure Maggie was getting up and dressed, knowing that it would be different considering there was no midnight wake up call. Entering her room was a rarity and she never got to see Maggie asleep in bed. Sure, occasionally Maggie would fall asleep on Belinda's lap but it was usually Maggie lulling Belinda to sleep now. And so Belinda grasped Maggie by the shoulder gently, shaking her and murmuring a few 'good morning's.

It took a few minutes but eventually Maggie's sleepy brown eyes met Belinda's own green ones. But once she had gained her bearings she beamed at Belinda,

her thin arms wrapping around Belinda's waist. Belinda couldn't help but hug that tiny child back, feeling a growing spread of warmth uncurl in her heart.

"You did it Belinda! You've never made it through a night before," Maggie whispered excitedly. "It's because you talked to Jack, isn't it? I knew he would be good for you. Oh wow, I'm so happy!"

"Yeah, we both finally got a proper night's sleep," Belinda chortled. "And now you have to get ready for school if you want me to walk with you. I actually have time for a change!"

Maggie was up and dressed so quickly that Belinda had to smile. Maggie even had the time to pick her breakfast leisurely, bringing Belinda's earlier thoughts back to the forefront of her mind. She watched Maggie, puzzled at how it seemed so ordinary for her to just pick her food and eat it. Must be a routine thing, she thought to herself. Voicing her curiosity from before, Maggie gave her an odd, yet amused, look.

"I don't know Belinda," Maggie said earnestly. "You've never eaten breakfast here before. Not even on weekends."

"Huh. I'll have to make us some pancakes sometime soon then. They're my favourite," she confessed, her eyes lighting up. "You finished? Because we should really get going before it gets too late."

Leaving Maggie at the primary school gates she was aware of the strange looks aimed at her from all sides. The parents were gossiping and the other children weren't much better. She could see Maggie's friends watching her leave and she waved one last time before going back the way she came. She made a quick check on her watch before making her walk a little hastier. She had told a tiny white lie this morning - she didn't really have time but she knew Maggie enjoyed the talks on the way to school. It got lonely when you walked alone.

It was funny that as she thought of this someone went whizzing past her, clipping her arm as they went. The person stopped their bicycle and made an about turn to make sure she was okay. But their eyes

crinkled after the instant recognition. Jack smiled before remembering he had just hit her and a concerned expression ran across his features.

"Hey Bel, I'm sorry! I didn't really see you there."

"Hey no problem, it's not so bad. It just stings a little," she teased, knowing he knew it didn't even sting. "Don't suppose you can give me a lift, considering I'm damaged? I would hate to be late because of it."

The joking came naturally, although Jack did give her a lift. It took at least ten minutes off of her walk and she got to talk to Jack once they arrived. He didn't so much as look at the people he usually hung out with and that gave Belinda a warm glow inside. It was so unusual to have a friend again, so long after her last one. And Jess had never been this easy to talk to.

"So I take it your mum didn't totally freak out when you didn't show up straight away?" Belinda said, remembering why he needed to leave so suddenly. "I mean, you don't look like you got in trouble..."

"Yeah, she got in just after I did," Jack said, grinning widely. "She had no idea I wasn't home before that so

she didn't ask. But I did tell her I made friends with you." Seeing the quizzical look on Belinda's face he added, "She asked how my day went."

Belinda smiled again, enjoying the stares she was getting from people as she talked to Jack. It wasn't often she got stares that were neither pity nor hate. Jealousy was new to her - at least when it was directed at her.

Chapter 7

I Want Him Back... - Part 7

[Okay, not my longest piece. But not my shortest either so I will have to hope you forgive me! Hope you're enjoying it and even if you're not, please, for the love of bajebus, comment people! I *NEED* some more feedback. But I love that it's being read! ^_^ Thanks to NougamiNeuro11 and SarahRuRu for always managing to leave a comment!]

Sitting at lunch with Jack just became easier with every day that passed. At the weekend, Belinda spent time in the house with Maggie, tidying, playing games, everything. It was odd but she was getting the balance better now. At first, she had wanted to spend all her time with Jack, to gain that constant secure

feeling she needed. Then, when she realised she couldn't, she had wanted to abandon the idea of having friends - if she kept flicking back and forth, it would kill her, wouldn't it? But finally it was in balance and she felt better than she had in...she couldn't remember how long it had been since she had felt this good. The nightmares still bothered her a lot of the time, but they were less frequent as well as less vivid. She was managing to wake up slowly, not screaming for Keith.

Ah, she thought. Keith. The thought still brought that lump to her throat, threatening to dissolve into tears. She still missed him terribly, the feeling of wanting him never far from her thoughts. When she was alone at night and couldn't sleep, she would recall the way he had kissed her and the way it had sent her head reeling. Every touch had been electrifying, sizzling her nerves before burning away her defences. And it didn't stop there...

And every time Belinda let herself fall back like this, she relapsed. Those were the nights the nightmares came back with a vengeance. Those were the nights

that when she finally awoke, she had to go to the bathroom to vomit, her shaking unbearable. She was getting better at suppressing the urge to remember, leaving all of those memories in a sealed box in the bottom of her heart.

So when, two weeks later, Belinda was helping to clean out the attic and she came across a dusty book that made her whole hand tingle when she touched it, she was confused. Letting go momentarily, she bent to pick it up again. No, it was definitely tingling in her palm. She flipped it open, eager to know the contents so that her curiosity might be satiated. Besides, it was almost as though the book wanted to be read, as when she let it fall open, it fell to the first page.

'Dear diary,' it read. Belinda's breath caught for a moment before she realised that it looked nothing like her own little velvety purple book. She looked at the rich leather-bound green cover again before flicking it open again. She felt like she had to know what it said. It was calling out to her in a way other

books never had, pulling all of her attention to the neat, precise writing.

'Dear diary

Joseph was here again today. He's so sweet, always bringing me flowers and tales from his home town. I forget where he's from but they're such delightful anecdotes, endearing and melancholic. He asked me if there were any interesting stories I knew once, and I had been terribly upset to find that I had no amusing memories to share. Would he think me to be unbearably dull? Heaven knows I'm not the most intriguing of companions...yet he talks to me, of all of the other girls in our meek town, he chooses me. And I know Father approves of our friendship, regardless of whether I am adequate for Joseph. Also, his father spends a great deal of time with my own, increasing any chance I have of knowing the real Joseph. Oh, I know that Joseph is honest and kind and essentially good but...he hides something. I am, thus far, unsure of what this is, but I pray that he would feel comfortable enough to confide in me one day.'

Belinda was riveted, ready to turn the next page when she heard her name being called. Checking her watch, she realised that it was past two o' clock! The person calling her down must be Geri, trying to get her to eat lunch. Oh...but I want to keep reading, she thought, before resigning herself to go. After all, she could always leave the book in her room and go back to it...

It wasn't until late that night that Belinda had enough time to read the diary. But she was eager not to leave it any longer, rushing through the process of getting ready for bed. She murmured a hasty 'goodnight' to Maggie before burying her nose in the book, picking up where she had left off.

'Dear diary

Father is behaving strangely today. I cannot place the behaviour, nor why it is odd but I know it is unusual for him to arrive home at such a desolate hour. His temper is growing shorter and his eyes, whilst always quick to catch mistakes, have become hard and distant. I am afraid, afraid that the distance will increase and I shall lose the loving man who has

been my anchor. I wish to tell mother of the distance that is appearing but I do not wish to frighten her. The illness which is harassing her body is debilitating her enough that I cannot say those four simple words. 'Father is scaring me.' It should be simple. And yet it isn't. I wish Joseph were here to share his thoughts on the matter but he has made his presence scarce these last days.'

Belinda knew she was dozing. She could feel the room around her changing, but she could feel the bed beneath her too. Weird. But then she fell into deeper sleep, the book falling from her grasp as her hands became flaccid. And then she knew no more until morning.

Chapter 8

I Want Him Back... - Part 8

[To make up for the short chapter, here's another one ^_^. Okay, mainly because I wanted to write it because the suspense was killing ME. Sad, I know but to be honest, I'm surprising myself in this story ^_^ Thanks for the comments on the last chapter! Keep it coming please!]

Beep-beep-beep. Beep-beep-beep. Beep-beep-bee-

Belinda's hand crashed down on her alarm, stretching as she did so. It felt good to be up first thing on a Sunday morning, not wasting time. Looking around for the diary, she felt a twinge of something. It was like she was forgetting something,

something that was worrying her...what was she forgetting? It wasn't Keith for Keith was always there. She didn't have plans and she couldn't possibly be late for anything...

She shrugged it from her mind. She refused to let the idea that something might be bothering her ruin her morning. So instead of pursuing the thought, she let it slip through the probing fingers of her mind and hummed merrily as she searched for breakfast. Hmmm. Pop-tarts today, she thought cheerfully, opening a chocolate one. She was on her second one when she felt it.

She was standing in a sleeveless-top-and-shorts set, facing the sink with her hair down. So when she felt the first whisper of something on her shoulder, she thought it was her hair. Scratching at it a little as it tickled, she ignored it, reaching for a glass. She was thirsty and she was reaching for a carton of orange juice when she glanced in the mirror, a reflex reaction.

So she was surprised when she saw the smudge of something moving behind her. She stood right next to

it as she poured her juice, trying to see if the smudge was a trick of the light or something on the actual mirror. And then she saw it again, almost as if something was gathering behind her, swirling and forming. Of course, she glanced behind her immediately but saw nothing. So she looked back at the mirror, confused and-

* * *

Maggie bolted awake at the sound of screaming. She had grown so accustomed to the sound that she would probably wake up to it even if she was two floors above it. She practically flew to Belinda's room, frightened. It had been nearly a whole week since Belinda had woke screaming, which had led Maggie to that safe zone of thinking Belinda was doing better, might be getting over the nightmares. And once Belinda was over the nightmares, Maggie could tell her-

She wasn't in her room. Maggie looked down at the made bed before listening again. Oh, she thought, it's coming from downstairs. But why is Belinda screaming downstairs? The thoughts ran even as

Maggie did, flying to Belinda's side in the kitchen. Or at least she tried but was halted by the shards of glass in the middle of an orange puddle. And Belinda was sitting beside it, screaming, eyes wide in terror and pain.

"Belinda! Belinda, are you okay?" Maggie said desperately and she picked her was across the puddle without stepping on the glass. "Oh, Belinda, what's wrong?"

Belinda shuddered, the screams cutting off slowly. Almost as if Belinda was choking them down. Maggie prayed her mother was still in bed, blissfully unaware so that Belinda could tell her in her own time. It wasn't that Belinda didn't trust her, Maggie knew. But Maggie was the one Belinda was closer to her emotionally and she was who Belinda turned to. Even as Maggie hushed her now, Belinda was thinking of how to tell her what she'd just seen, what had...appeared.

"Oh, Maggie, it was terrible," Belinda sobbed, her head in her hands. "I was just...I was getting juice and

then...it was just there. And then it...and I...oh Maggie, I was..."

Soon Maggie managed to clean up the mess - both Belinda and the orange juice - and she joined Belinda in the living room. Belinda was slowly coming out of the shock, her eyes coated in both shed and unshed tears. The pain beneath the tears was so strong that Maggie felt like there was a knife in her own gut, twisting to make her feel that same intensity and loss. And even like that, Maggie didn't know if she could ever really understand how much it was hurting Belinda to relive this.

"...and then, I looked in the mirror and...and...he was just there, looking at me," Belinda said, her breathing accelerating and hitching. Maggie knew there was no point asking who 'he' was. But Belinda was going on. "Oh Maggie, he looked so...I don't know, I thought he looked happy for a second, like he thought he was back. And then he looked scared and then- then he looked like he needed something. And then," she sobbed hysterically, "then he started reaching for me, and his lips were moving, like he was trying to tell

me something and I couldn't tell what he was saying!"

Belinda had howled the last words with such anguish that Maggie couldn't help but reach for her, hold her. She was worried, not because she thought Belinda was losing her mind but that Keith might be in more trouble than she had thought. But he's all in one piece, Maggie thought, her hands shaking as she stroked Belinda's hair. Belinda needed her now and Keith could have her help when that was done. From the sounds of it, it was what he would want anyway.

As Belinda's new bout of hysterics drew to a close, Maggie let her sit up. Belinda gave a watery smile and scrubbed at the tears on her cheeks. Now that her time of confidence was over, she was trying to cover up, try to make Maggie believe she was recovering. Maggie wondered, in that instant, why Belinda was up already. Belinda rarely woke earlier but it had been a growing trend all week, she realised.

Had Belinda woken up happy? Had Keith seen that, was that why he had been happy? Had he been

scared because she had got scared? Could this - however unlikely the thought appeared to Maggie - have all been Belinda's imagination? Could she have imagined Keith in the daytime instead of at night this time? Or, Maggie thought suddenly, were the dreams being sent to her too? Was there a force at work here, that was trying to tell them something they were missing?

"Thanks Maggie," Belinda said, her eyes genuinely grateful. "I'm really sorry I woke you up. I was...I should have stayed in bed this morning, I shouldn't have pushed it. I'm really, really sorry."

Maggie let Belinda go on her way, her mind flicking into overdrive. It made sense that someone - possibly two - was trying to get in touch with Belinda and Keith made the logical choice. But Keith wouldn't want to send Belinda horror, not if Belinda was reading him accurately this morning. Maggie could understand if the dreams were a warning but they were only telling her what she already knew. Was there anyway they could work this out without Belinda breaking?

Belinda, at this point, was sitting on her bed, thinking. She had told a little lie. Not about anything important, she knew but she still couldn't have sat there any longer without telling Maggie what else had happened. She didn't want to share that particular horror, nor the intimacy intertwined inside it.

Belinda sat back and relived those last moments. Keith had seen her fall, followed her down. His hand had reached to brush her cheek, his lips caressing her name, like it was a prayer, as if saying the word could break the barrier between them. His eyes had been so soft and she knew that her own had been filled with an intense longing. And she had sworn that she had felt his hand brush her cheek, oh so lightly, almost like a moth's wing. And she had reached up, wanting to feel it again and-

And that was when her hand had gone through his arm. That was what had made her scream. Not seeing him, not having him near her but not being able to touch him, as if he were a-a ghost. And Keith had looked at his own hand with horror plain and

pain evident. He had clutched at it, backing away as though it was contagious. But she had seen the effort it took to leave her. She had seen how much he had needed company and she had screamed. And now he was gone. Again.

Chapter 9

I Want Him Back... - Part 9

"Need another lift, Bel?" Jack joked as he pulled up next to her and Maggie outside of the school. It was just easier this way, for Belinda at least, and it gave Maggie someone to walk to and from school with, seeing as Jack gave Belinda a ride. It also meant Belinda was never late, and she had someone to talk to before the bell sounded, signalling hours of mindless 'teaching'. Belinda often referred to it as torture, gaining that appreciative snort from Jack that showed he understood.

But today Belinda looked haunted, even to Maggie who had only ever known a haunted Belinda until recently. Belinda had come in to wake Maggie, her

eyes red and bags beneath them. There had been no trace of tears but Maggie was sure that Belinda had lain awake and cried last night. And so, she was reluctant to let her go into school, to face a horde of people who didn't understand.

"Thanks Jack," Belinda said tiredly, climbing up. Maggie's hand reached up and clasped hers briefly, her tiny face full of worry. "Don't worry Mags, I haven't fallen off yet. I doubt I'll start today." She leaned forward, balancing precariously to whisper, "It's okay, honest. I'll be okay, I promise."

And with that promise she nudged Jack, commenting on the time. And Belinda could feel Maggie's eyes on her back all the way to the corner of the street. It was a tremendous relief, almost palpable in it's intensity. She was sure Jack felt the tension melt away from her. He wasn't the dumbest guy around, certainly, and she knew that he could tell when she was stressed and when she wasn't.

Pondering that thought, she let it run away, like a mischievous train, building it's own tracks. Sometimes I think we're on the same wave length,

she thought. It's like...I don't know, like he's...and then there are those times, when he's watching me... The thoughts just spun in a direction all their own as the short but comfortable ride ended.

Jack was watching her with an unfathomable expression, his face scrunched with worry. He knew it wasn't like her to cry, not when she could be seen. And it was true that she hadn't cried where he could see. But...he would have known without the red eyes, or the sombre mood in front of the primary school. Belinda knew he would have, the same way she would have known if he had been hurt. His expression may be indecipherable, but all his eyes held was concern.

Belinda waited for him to try to broach the subject so she could claim it off limits, but he seemed to already know that this was something he shouldn't ask her about. At least not yet. His eyes shifted - although they remained concerned - and he started the chatter with harmless topics, easy jokes lightening the mood perceptibly. Belinda responded eagerly, the topics

kept firmly on no-mans-land until they had to separate.

Even then, it was on good terms, only the promise of seeing her at lunch tying her down. The parting wasn't marred by the usual feeling that Belinda had lost a leg instead of a friend leaving for lessons. It must be the new optimism, she thought. Her good mood lasted a predictable three minutes. That was how long it took for the teacher to stop talking and Emma to get her claws in. Belinda had known it would be a bad day, but she had not expected it to get as bad as that. Everything was going to wrong today, she realised, the realisation bringing only a mild surprise.

The shock from yesterday had melted and given way to depression, which led to self-pity that eventually led to an epiphany of sorts: nothing she could do would make her life worse. But, she thought fiercely, I can always turn it. Whatever happens, I can do my damnedest to get in the way and fix it. She was concentrating so hard on this that she only tuned into the last part of Emma's little rant.

"...so stay away! Do you hear me?"

"Um, actually? No, I didn't catch a word of that," Belinda said easily, tilting back on her chair, looking bored. The bored part came naturally, the small workings of Emma Hawton dulling her senses immeasurably. "So if you want me to hear you, try again."

"You little bi-"

"Miss Hawton," the teacher, Mr Gale, interrupted. "Miss Godfrey. Care to share your thoughts with the rest of the class? Or is there something you would like to discuss with me after class?"

"Oh, I'm sorry Mr Gale," Emma said, simpering. "Belinda just wouldn't be quiet, so I was telling her-"

"I heard what you were telling her, Miss Hawton," he replied, his expression mirroring Belinda's from a moment ago. "And I very much doubt that this Jack person appreciates you warning his friends away. Regardless, I would prefer it if you weren't distracting my class with your social problems."

Emma flushed red and Belinda bit back the giggles that were threatening to ensue. The rest of their classmates had no apparent restraint as the uproar took five minutes to calm. But Belinda didn't miss the should-have-been deadly look the Emma shot her. Great, she thought. Now I'm going to have to deal with her again later. Fun. But instead of rising to the bait now, she decided to let Emma stew for a little while. To come up with something really creative to get back at Belinda with, just to relieve the boring monotony Emma seemed to emit unconsciously.

"Yes sir," Emma, so quietly it was almost inaudible. The humiliation was something she wouldn't forget, if nothing else. That made the morning, instantly more tolerable for Belinda. She hadn't really cared from the beginning what Emma was going to do, but now she was positively buzzing from the thought of dealing with it, from dealing with something on her own, without a knight in shining armour.

All the way through the day, Belinda could feel the tension building. Even when Emma was out of the classroom, Belinda knew she was plotting and

scheming. Sometimes, the image of Emma in a dungeon, a cauldron in the middle of the room in which a potion was brewing, flew across Belinda's mind, almost making her giggle out loud. It was ridiculous, of course, to think of Emma as a witch but it made a good joke.

She wouldn't make a very good witch, Belinda thought distantly. The idea slipped away like the ebbing of a tide and she didn't much care. She was beginning to think that ideas that didn't stay, weren't meant to be caught yet. Eventually, the thought would come back and she could pursue it then. Until then, she would entertain herself with cartoonish images of Emma in the margins of her work. One was of Emma stomping her foot, something beneath it.

Odd, she thought. I don't remember drawing that one... Even as she watched, the drawing seemed alive, moving on it's own. Captivated, Belinda watched as the Emma in the picture picked up the thing beneath her foot and threw it at another figures head. Belinda could almost hear the soft splat

as it made contact with the figure and then Emma's figure doubled over in laughter. The laughter seemed to ring in Belinda's ears, other people's echoing it. Then the picture vanished and the word 'sorry' flashed before the space went blank, save for the usual lines.

And that was when Belinda started to worry about lunch time.

[Thanks to the fans, and the people who are starting to read anyway ^_^ Comments are appreciated and taken either in good humour or seriously, depending on what you leave. I won't harm anyone for leaving mean comments as long as it's constructive for me ^_^. Thanks again!]

Chapter 10

I Want Him Back... - Part 10

[Heya guys! Okay, so here's the shout outs! I looked at my stories today and I have TWO HUNDRED READS on a couple of them! I'm THIIIS happy and more. Plus, I want to recommend my friend NougamiNeuro11's story. It. Is. AWESOME. Seriously, read it. And thanks to all the people who fanned me, I'm glad you think my story's that good ^_^!! Much love to all those people who commented and keep them coming!]

It's okay, it's going to be fine. Nothing to worry about, it's just Emma...

Belinda kept reassuring herself like this, trying to distract herself by reading that diary she had found. It was fairly dull now that she was over her initial curiosity. Whoever the girl was seemed clueless and airheaded, and all the diary did now was make Belinda miss her own. But it definitely distracted her from the increasing tension that was building in the pit of her stomach. And the compulsion to read it was maintaining, despite the boring contents of it.

Lunch time arrived and Belinda felt like she was going to be sick. Not only was she nervous as hell, but the way the tension inside of her had suddenly snapped, she was sure it was going to happen now. And the images from earlier were etched onto her brain, almost taunting her. Let's just get it over with, she thought with an outward sigh. And perked instantly when she saw Jack at their table.

"Hey," she called, his smile enticing one from her. It was always like this with Jack and Belinda sincerely hoped it always would be. She loved the way they just - clicked. "So how's your day going?"

"Feh, same as usual. Did you know that Mrs. Harper has this really big mole-"

"Belinda, can I have a word?" Emma interrupted Jack, her voice, which was usually light and tinkling, hard and ugly. She said it low enough that not even Jack heard her. Of course not, Belinda thought grudgingly. She wouldn't want to lose face, not again. "If you're not majorly busy that is."

"I don't know Emma," Belinda said, her tone mocking. She would not give her the satisfaction of knowing how nervous she was. "I was just catching up with Jack here, seeing as we don't have any classes together."

"Well, it'll only take a second," Emma said sweetly, the threatening tone dropped for now. "I mean, I'm sure Jack could spare you for a second, couldn't you Jack?" She turned to him imploringly.

"Uh, it's up to Bel really," Jack murmured, obviously not wanting to be the start of a fight. Even if he didn't have the weird connection with Belinda he would have seen how much the two girls disliked one another. "But I-"

"You know what Jack?" Belinda interrupted. "You're right, it is my choice. And I think you should just leave me alone Emma. It's not like I did anything to you. I'm not the one who spreads rumours about people, am I?"

Emma was seething. Belinda amused herself by watching the different colours Emma could turn. At least, she tried to find it amusing but the way Emma was practically growling made her uncomfortable - to say the least! She physically made herself hold still instead of flinching as Emma reached forward to brush something off of the table. And then Emma began stomping on a black smudge, on the floor.

Déjà vu swept over Belinda, cold and clear. She had a split second's memory before Emma picked up the thing and flung it at her. The moment of hesitation that might have been vanished and Belinda ducked instinctively. The object flew over her head and struck Jack who flinched back, eyeing the black thing with distaste. She could almost hear Emma cursing her for ducking but she didn't care.

"Hey, what the hell is that thing?" Jack asked, gingerly poking it. He poked it a little harder and it flopped off of the table, making a soft 'whump' as it hit the floor. Belinda looked around, surprised that she could hear such a quiet sound, to find everybody watching their table. She looked up at Emma before bending deliberately to pick up the thing.

"Oh my god," somebody shrieked. Belinda had to assume it was a girl. "It's a spider! Oh my god, it's huge! Eww, put it down Belinda! What if it bites you?"

"I wouldn't worry about that," Jack said drily, glancing at whoever was talking before looking at the spider again. Belinda felt a giggle bubbling to the surface of her calm. "It's definitely dead. You saw Emma going crazy and stomping on it. Before she threw it at Bel," he added, the accusation in his voice not quite hidden.

"I-it was a joke, Jack! God, anyone can see it's -"

"It's rubber," Belinda giggled, stretching it's tiny legs before dropping it on her lap. "God, Emma, immature much? How long were you setting that up for?"

Emma went a deep scarlet, her trademark sneer wiped from her face. She looked worse than embarrassed, as though Belinda had just ripped a limb from her. It occurred to Belinda then that that was all Emma was - a pretty face who had a standing to keep. But Belinda felt no kindness for her, no shred of sympathy. She had been Belinda's tormentor for too long now for her to gain support from her. Belinda may be a good person but she wasn't that good.

Jack laughed with her, although to his credit he was trying not to. He was chivalrous, a trait lost in most people now. And it made Belinda feel better about laughing: if Jack couldn't keep it in, nobody could be expected to. It was something of a novelty, walking through the school halls and seeing people smile at her. But the glow soon faded as Belinda's teeth worried her bottom lip

It's not like it matters, a darker part of her whispered. So you knew something was going to happen. So what? It's not like you did anything dangerous with it. And she deserved humiliation.

Remember what she did to you? Like they say - karma's a bitch. The voice did nothing to ease the gnawing fear in the pit of her stomach. It was almost as bad as the tension, distracting her and aching.

She was silent as she rode on the back of Jack's bicycle today, thoughts swirling like clouds in a tornado. Was there something going on? Was something inside of her changing? She'd never had prophetic dreams before, barely ever got bad feelings about things that often went wrong! Hell, she'd had no warning with Andrew, had she?

Ah, yes, but maybe - just maybe - it's not you having these dreams, these visions, part of her thought again. Maybe someone else is having them and you're just picking up on them. The thoughts ran on and on, consuming enough that she didn't realise that she was outside Maggie's school. It took Jack shaking her shoulder combined with almost falling off of the bicycle to rouse her from her thoughts.

"Oh, thanks again Jack," Belinda said absently as Maggie approached them. Jack shook his head, smiling, before waving goodbye to Maggie and going

home. Belinda half watched him go as her mind carried on whirring. Maggie looked confused but Belinda paid it no mind. If Maggie really wanted to know, she would ask and if Belinda felt like telling her anyway, she would. It was wonderful to just walk, the silence between them friendly instead of awkward.

"Belinda, what's up?" Maggie ventured eventually, only a couple of streets from her own. "Something happen at school?"

"Yeah," Belinda began before thinking about it. Maggie might know where the vision had come from, might know how to interpret it. "Hey, Mags, have you ever...I had this weird vision today, in class..."

Belinda launched into the full story, recounting it as Maggie listened patiently. And then Maggie looked at her, her eyes soft and relieved.

"You're lucky she didn't do worse," Maggie said, hugging her tightly. "She's not exactly the nicest person around, is she?" It didn't really sound like a question. "I can't believe how immature she is though! I mean, come on!"

Belinda laughed, forgetting about the vision. She hadn't meant to but once she was talking to Maggie, she forgot that Maggie hadn't told her anything about sudden visions and where they could come from...

Chapter 11

I Want Him Back... - Part 11

[Okay, I know. LONG break. But I couldn't help it. I am very stressed at the moment so be forgiving. It's not amazingly long but I think I should be forgiven as it tells you what Keith is. Pwease don't damage me! As always, comments and votes are welcomed and appreciated.^_^ Read and enjoy!]

Maggie shut the door to her room, breathing a sigh of relief. Belinda had dropped it, just like she had hoped, leaving her free from any guilt. It was a tricky situation but Maggie just couldn't let Emma get away with picking on Belinda. It was fair to warn Belinda, it must be! It wouldn't change anything in the grand scheme of things, would it? she thought worriedly,

her eyes flickering to the kitchen door before she closed them briefly.

Belinda was chopping vegetables, working slowly but stolidly through the carrots. She didn't help with dinner often but she tried all the time. Today, Gina had left a set of instructions on top of a pile of carrots, potatoes and a bag of peas. It wasn't easy for her, and she didn't enjoy it, but cooking helped both Gina and Maggie and it didn't always go wrong.

She could hear Maggie in the living room, watching some lame cartoon. She shook her head and smiled as she finished cutting the carrots, dropping them into the water and turning on the stove. Dusting her hands off and opening the door, she looked for Maggie immediately. It really had become a reflex, caring for the kid, demanding much time and energy but Belinda didn't mind.

Maggie was evidently fast asleep, her face blank and smooth. Belinda shook her head again and closed the door quietly behind her, letting her own thoughts wash over her properly. Everything was happening too fast. The world just kept turning, spinning her

into confusion and pain. She needed to help Keith but she didn't know how, wanted to recapture his smile but couldn't do anything but hurt him. Maybe she should talk to Jack about it. He would understand what was happening to her, would help her through it - step by baby-step.

She hadn't even realised she was reaching for her bag until she had the diary in her hands and was flipping back to the last page she was on. She looked down at it in amazement before hurling herself back into the miniature world at her fingers. She couldn't help but dive into the world that was so absurdly ordinary to her now.

'Dear diary,

Joseph has finally deemed me worthy of knowing his secret. I'm so excited, though he insists that we must meet later to discuss it. I'm terribly torn as to whether I listen to him and meet with him, or if Father will be to angry once he discovers me missing. He has become so horrible towards me, his temper rarely abated by his success at work. It's been horrendous living with him, almost as though he's a

new person! I shall write again later to tell you whether I decided to meet with Joseph.'

Belinda was turning to the next page when something crashed in the living room. Dumping the book on the counter, she ran towards the sound, calling out to Maggie as she went. The first thing she saw was that Maggie was blinking sleepily, looking up at Belinda. The second thing she saw - well, felt really as she stood on it - was the broken vase at the end of the sofa.

Hopping away from the sharp shards of pottery, Belinda tried her best not to curse aloud. Several 'naughty' words were exploding through her mind but, thankfully, she apparently had more self restraint than she had thought. After several minutes of hopping, she made it into the kitchen to stop her blood ruining the carpet.

"Oh, God, Belinda," Maggie cried, her eyes filling with tears. "I'm so sorry, I don't know how it happened! I-I-"

"Chill out Mags, it's fine. It's just a little blood. It's not even that bad. Honest."

Belinda carried on hushing Maggie, calming her whilst cleaning up her foot. It was worse than she had thought to start with, but it still wasn't as bad as Maggie thought it was. Gina came in about halfway through and helped finish the food and put plasters on her foot. It doesn't take as long once someone knows what they're doing, Belinda thought absently.

It wasn't for another few hours that Belinda realised she hadn't read the next instalment of the diary and she felt that urgency biting into her again. Saying 'goodnight' to Maggie and Gina, she rushed through getting ready for bed. She was desperate to know what the secret was, was thirsting for the information like someone lost in a desert looking for water. She needed to know. She felt the relief at finally sitting down and settling into the book.

'Dear Diary,

I decided to go to speak with Joseph. I know it's unsafe to meet with a young gentleman without an escort but...I was DESPERATE to know his secret. I have known him so long, it seems unnatural that I did not know everything about him. And yet

this...this completely threw me and I no longer know what is and isn't natural. I am ashamed to say that I was not a lady and lost control of my actions. I think the least said about my reaction, the better and that it would be unreasonable for anyone to receive such information and not react. Indeed, it was unwise to scream but honestly, he couldn't expect the news of him being of Wiccan faith to be regarded as GOOD. Maybe I can apologise for my outburst tomorrow, once I have recovered from the shock.'

Belinda lay back as she thought hard. Wiccan...wasn't that a witch thing? Surely, she couldn't have really believed that Joseph was a witch! First of all, he was a guy! Secondly, there was no such thing as witches!...was there? Belinda let her mind run over everything she knew about witches and history. Sure, it was always a hot topic when talking in class about Victorians or, or, whoever the hell it was that burned them at stakes but...wasn't it really just a bunch of crazy people who tried to change their lives in crazy ways??

Agitated as she was, she couldn't help but fall asleep, her mind slowing from the insane running into a sluggish crawl. She could feel her brain slipping into a dreamy state, her mind relaxing and expanding. Even as she tried to stop the thought, she imagined Keith laying down next to her, holding her tight against his chest. She could almost feel his warmth, his heartbeat thudding a steady rhythm for her.

It felt so real, so safe that Belinda couldn't help the tears washing down her cheeks. They were happy tears tinged with longing. She knew it was wrong to think of him like this but she couldn't help what her mind did when she was trying to sleep, what it made her feel. She almost didn't want anything but the sweet safety that came with his nearness - almost. More than the safety though, she wanted the insanity his kisses brought her with an intensity that should be crossing a line.

Maggie sat with her mother, wondering how on earth she would explain all of this to her. She hadn't meant to lose control - it had never happened before! She knew how dangerous it was, for her and Gina, even

for Belinda! But maybe it was time to tell Belinda, to let her know what was going on.

"Look, mum, I swear she doesn't know what's going on," Maggie pleaded. "I just think that she might be ready to know. She's gotten a lot better, and she-"

Maggie broke off, biting her lip in worry. She didn't really want her mother to know that she had sent Belinda a vision. It would end in an argument and she was unlikely to win. But she had already said too much, and Gina was quick with things like this. Maggie gave it a moments thought before arriving at the conclusion that the only thing she could do was put it in the best light possible.

"Okay, don't freak mum, please..."

Chapter 12

I Want Him Back... - Part 12

[Heya guys! Sorry about the lack of uploading. And it's a pretty crappy chapter. But I tried to put more Keith in, without really changing what I'm doing too much...Hope you like it! Thanks to everyone who comments, and I hope they can do so again this time! Happy Reading!^_^]

Belinda woke early again the next day, her mind oddly clouded. Her body felt sluggish and her head felt heavy. A headache zinged through her and her sinuses were blocked. Great, Belinda thought to herself. Just perfect, now I'm ILL. She slid from her bed, trying to stop the room from swaying around

her. Even as she tried to remain upright, her body tilted her back to the bed.

Eventually though, she forced herself to make it down the stairs, dragging her heavy feet one after the other until she found the paracetamol. Even as she forced two of them down, she wondered if she would make it through the day. Maybe if she...no, that wouldn't work...or...no, neither would that...

Belinda soon gave in to temptation and lay down on the sofa, not wishing to attempt climbing the stairs. Soon, her eyes were drifting closed, the world misting around her. She could feel time passing, but it was insignificant. Everything melted and formed something new. Suddenly, Belinda was lying, curled up, floating in grey space. The headache was still there, the feeling of being 'ill' still making her feel strange.

But, something else was forming, a swirl of silver that was barely noticeable in amongst the grey. At first, she assumed it was going to be a picture, something she was supposed to see, like the moving picture in class. But eventually, she saw a translucent

figure swirling into being; a strong jaw, muscular arms, concerned eyes, that smile...

Belinda felt her breath catch, saw him react to the sound and sat up, trying to choke out a greeting. She could see his face relax, his body becoming less taut. He was trying to say something, she knew it, but the words were muffled, as though she was suddenly underwater. It was her imagination, she knew, that kept her from hearing his voice, but she wasn't sure how that worked. She wanted desperately to hear his voice, feel his touch, know he was alright.

"Belinda," he murmured, his hands reaching for her, trying to catch hold of her. But once again, his hands passed through her, as though neither of them were really there - as if they were holograms trying to communicate. He looked stricken for a moment before he pulled his hands back and stuffed them in his pockets, as though it would erase the moment.

Belinda gave a sob of relief and curled into a tight ball. He was okay. He was okay! She could talk to him, find out how to get him out of wherever the hell he was, tell him everything that was going on. Their

eyes met and she gave a weak smile, tears dripping down her face as she let them free.

Maggie woke up later than usual, and alone. Belinda hadn't awakened her and that made her worry. Belinda always woke her in the morning. Racing to Belinda's room, she threw the door open. But Belinda wasn't there. An awful feeling of dread settled over her and she flew down the stairs, tearing into the living room. Belinda was there, she was relieved to see, but she had a deathly pallor, her face shiny with sweat.

Holding a hand to Belinda's forehead, Maggie felt the heat before it made contact. Something was terribly wrong with her, possibly something her body wouldn't recover from. A cold? Influenza? Or something worse? But even as she fretted uncontrollably she could feel the temperature drop slightly. Sighing, Maggie hoped that Belinda would be safe alone for the day. There was too much to do for Maggie to stay home and treat her.

Still, she worried as she made her way to school. Seeing Jack didn't make that any easier. Jack fretted

twice as much as she had and she wanted to calm him. She cursed her lack of time and hoped he would make it through the day as well. It sucked that she couldn't help Belinda or Jack right now but there were more pressing matters at hand. And they would need her attention more than anything else. Keith needed her help.

Belinda snapped awake, her head still foggy and aching, but she could walk again. And the time she had spent with Keith had cleared up other things, had made it possible for her to plan. She knew where he was. She knew what had to be done. She didn't know how to connect the two. If she knew how to get to him, she would have been there the moment he had suggested that she get help.

His eyes had tightened impossibly when she had begged him to tell her how to go to where he was, and he had said that he would rather be left there than have her come and get him. Well, that cleared at least one thing up for her. He didn't want her, no amount of time or distance had changed that. But she

couldn't let that stop her from going to him, couldn't allow him to stay there alone.

She let her eyes wander to the clock on the VCR and did a double take. No, surely that wasn't the time! Had she really been with Keith all day? It had seemed like less than an hour - she had wished he would stay with her longer. But now that she knew she had lost an entire day - a Friday no less! - she knew she needed to get into gear. She needed to talk to Maggie, let her know what she knew and that she wanted to help with their current situation.

She heard the knock on the door and was immediately thrown. She knew Maggie had her own key and that Gina was working late tonight. Groggily, she made her way toward the door, trying to think of who could possibly be coming over at this time of day. She had slept through everyone who would come in the daytime and now...

"Belinda! Are you okay?" Jack almost yelled, his question frantic. "I heard you were ill! You feeling any better?"

"Yeah, a little," Belinda said. She was surprised how thick her voice sounded, as opposed to hoarse. Had she really spent the day talking with Keith or had it all been her imagination? "Come on in. I need to ask you about something..."

Chapter 13

I Want Him Back... - Part 13

[Okay, sorry about this one. Short and a little rushed. But I WILL try and get more out ASAP. Pwomise. Hope you're all enjoying the plot. Suggestions are welcome ^_^. So is criticism, actually. Just, please, some comments? Yay, and thankies!]

So, hang on," Jack said slowly, his hands waving her to silence. "You're saying that Keith didn't really run away and now he needs your help because he's stuck in another world that has genies?"

"Yeah, something like that," Belinda agreed distractedly. She was anxious to get started looking for a way in. "But we need to hurry because he's been

there a couple of months now and I don't know how to get him back!"

Jack watched her for a moment, wondering what to do. He believed her - beyond a shadow of a doubt, he believed her. But...how was he supposed to help her? This was more confusing by the minute and he wanted to understand it better before he agreed to help her. Even if she was trying, they needed somebody who really understood it to tell him.

"Couldn't you, I don't know, get hold of Keith like you did before? He could explain this a whole lot better, I'm sur-"

"Don't you think I would if I could?" Belinda snapped, biting back the tears that threatened to break through. "If I could do it whenever I wanted I would have talked to him a heck of a lot sooner! God, I've been so scared that he might be d-dead that I can't sleep half the time!! And I'm not even sure he's going to be okay when I finally do get there and-"

"Okay, okay, I'm sorry," Jack said, his hands held up in apology. "I just- He's my best friend and I didn't know any of this! And he knew you, what? Three weeks, if

that, and you know everything about him. It's a little much to take in."

"Sorry," Belinda murmured, her eyes taking on a new shine. She forgot that she had only known Keith a short while, that some people knew him a lot better than she did. Sometimes, she forgot that anyone else knew Keith existed, forgot that he wasn't a figment of her imagination. "Look, we'll talk to Maggie. Maggie should be home any minute, and she can help explain everything."

Jack nodded, eager to know more. Maggie knew? Maggie was a witch? Huh, he thought. Should've seen that one coming. Maggie had always been old for her age, wise beyond her years. Everything fell into place in his mind, the odd occurrences, things Keith did that seemed random and senseless...everything began to make sense.

But it was much later by the time Maggie arrived home and Jack had left, reluctantly. Belinda was fretting, worry exhausting her even more than she was before, talking to Keith. Even as Maggie came in, Belinda was contemplating calling the police, her

head bursting with pain. She just about collapsed with relief when Maggie opened the door.

"Maggie, where on earth have you been?"

"I-I was at the library," Maggie explained, her eyes wide with apology. "Why're you up? You were really ill this morning. I wasn't sure about going to school."

"Ah, yeah, that's not really a problem. Listen, we need to talk, like right now."

"About what?" Maggie asked warily. She wasn't sure if this was a conversation she should have right now.

"About Keith, you, everything. I need your help, Mags. A lot, actually. So does Jack..."

And once again, Belinda launched into what had happened today.

Chapter 14

I Want Him Back... - Part 14

[Wow, I'm uploading a lot today ^_^! Okay, the installments are short. Butbut! It IS getting done. I probably wouldn't be uploading again today but I just saw that I got my twentieth fan! It's very gratifying that people want to read it enough to be a fan! Happy reading! Comments at the bottom pleases! ^_^]

"Ho-how did you know?" Maggie wailed, confused. "Keith told you, didn't he?! That butt! He knows he's not meant to-"

"Um, he didn't tell me Mags, not really. I already sort of - knew. He just filled in some of the blanks. But not

everything. And I need to know everything so I can go help him. Please Maggie," Belinda begged, her eyes shiny with tears. "I want him back, safe. I would give anything for him to come back safe."

Maggie deliberated, half of her wanting to wait and ask her mother, the other half wanting to get it over with before she could be told 'no'. But suddenly the door came open again and Gina stood before them, her eyes narrowed. Maggie instantly wished she had spent less time thinking and more time doing.

"Margaret Elizabeth James, there had better be a damned good explanation for this," Gina fumed, her eyes hard and icy. "How on Earth does she know any of what is going on?!"

"Wh-what do you mean mum?" Maggie stalled, trying to play it innocent. And failing miserably.

"Um, Gina, wait," Belinda interjected. "Maggie only just found out that I knew. Really. But right now, I need help. Keith -"

"What about Keith Belinda? He was foolish and that's why he's stuck where he is. I would go and get him if

I had time and resources. But, sadly, I'm lacking in both departments. And you still haven't answered my question."

"I read a diary - I don't know whose - it talked about Wiccans. I-I thought it might be an ancestor or something. Keith sort of told me about-"

"Keith was here?" Gina asked abruptly, looking around the living room with wide eyes. "Where? When? How? Is he still here? Wha-"

"He wasn't really here, exactly. I- this morning, I was ill and - well, I still am but - he sort of made this in-between place, somewhere we could talk. He- he's okay," she added gently, her headache, whilst constant, becoming less prominent. "He just wants some help getting out of there. I...I want to go after him. Jack said he'll help too, I don't know how much though..."

Gina seemed to be in some sort of shock. However, the shock slowly melted into anger. She seemed to grow taller in her rage and Belinda shrank against the cushions to try to avoid the wrath that was almost definitely aimed at her.

"You. Told. JACK?!?! What the hell is the matter with you?! Is it not evident that we don't tell people for a reason?! You idiot!!!!!"

"Wait, you don't understand," Belinda pleaded, eyes wide. "It's just, Jack, he's sort of- I don't even know but I had to tell him. He's too...important to me not to tell him all of this. He's helped me through so much. And I'm not saying you haven't," she added hastily, her headache coming back at full force. Oh, she thought. That must've been Gina. "Look, he needed to know. Keith, his best friend, has been missing for a month now and I don't know if he would have agreed to help if he didn't know what was at stake."

Belinda lapsed into silence, praying that Gina would understand. Slowly, she saw the woman's shoulders ease, her glare becoming more resigned than hating. She shook her head before beckoning for Belinda to follow her. Eagerly, she did and they entered the room at the far end of the hall. Belinda had often assumed it was a closet, or another spare bedroom.

Instead, when they entered she was amazed by the vast amounts of books, lining the walls, littering the

floor, all of varying size and shape. Belinda felt her breath catch in awe, her eyes wide as she saw the different texts, languages and sometimes a picture. She waited, almost impatiently, as Gina reached for a newer book, something written in English. She flicked through it before clearing her throat.

"Here, look," she called to Belinda. "This is the spell Keith used to get there. The only problem is, you're going to need an anchor - someone to open it for you when you get back. You can't take the ingredients or anything with you, so you can't take Maggie. I have work, so you can't expect me to wait around at the house. But...there's a holiday coming up, isn't there? Maybe you can do it then." Gina looked up in grim determination. "I want my boy back now. And, if you're willing to go, I can prepare you for it."

Chapter 15

I Want Him Back... - Part 15 [FINAL INSTALLMENT]

[Thanks for reading thus far folks! Also, Big thanks for the comments and fannage! Hopefully, I will carry on again soonish! ^_^]

Belinda was keyed up. She knew what she had to do. Jack was standing by her, helping her in every way he could. Maggie had been learning the incantations, the different protection spells, anything that would make it easier. And Gina...Gina had stopped fighting. She was going to let Belinda get Keith, was allowing her a measure of trust. It was gratifying to know that she had earned that trust.

"Hey, you still visiting your mum this week?" Jack asked, his voice gentle. He had been a constant source of support and she was glad to be able to lean on him. He made everything easier and he still had that calming aura to him. She still always felt safe. "Because I can come with, if you want."

"Oh, sure," Belinda said, trying to make it less of a big deal. This could be the last time she saw her, the last time she ever said goodbye. Not that her mum would care but...she still had to say goodbye. Even thinking about leaving her made her anxious again, something in her stomach eating away at it.

"I mean," Jack emphasised, "that I could walk you there and then we can both go back to Keith's and get going. You know, to save time. We don't know how long we'll be there, do we?"

Keith, Belinda thought, intense longing breaking in overwhelming waves. She found it hard to believe that she would finally get to see him, that she would finally be able to touch him. She missed him more as the days counting down to Saturday grew less. It was like her body could tell she was going to him, like it

knew she needed him more than air. The longing was almost too much for her most of the time.

"Yeah, you're right," Belinda said, trying to keep the impatience out of her voice. But Jack always seemed to know what she was feeling, like he was part of her. He smiled and hugged her briefly, before heading home and leaving her with Maggie.

"It's not that long, Belinda, honest."

"I know, I know, but...I really wish the week was over already! I need to see him, it's like he's been gone years. Will he look the same? Will he sound the same? Has he suffered a lot? The questions don't stop Mags. I need to know he's okay, really okay."

* * *

"I don't know how long I'll be gone mum," Belinda explained patiently, trying to get through to her. "And...I'll try keep in touch but...I can't guarantee that I will. I don't even know if you're listening..."

Belinda left about twenty minutes later, looking at her mum sadly, half wishing she would wake up, half dreading that she would. If she woke up, it would be

a dream come true - her mum would definitely be well! But then again if she did...there was always the chance that Belinda would use it as an excuse to stay. Nobody would blame her but...she would always know that she could have brought Keith out sooner.

But Lizzie didn't wake up and soon Jack and Belinda were back at the James' house, listening to Maggie chant. Belinda clung tightly to Jack's hand, her nails digging into it a little. He gave hers a gentle squeeze back just before the portal opened and then Maggie was urging them forwards with her eyes. Jack was taking bold steps and Belinda had sudden fears of not coming back - of being stuck there like Keith.

But then she was through, into another dimension and there was no turning back.

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About the Author

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